

Homily For the 6th Sunday of Easter - Year C

St. Peter's Sat. 5:00pm/Sun 8:00,9:30,11:30am Masses - May 22, 2022

Acts 15:1-2,22-29 "It seems good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these"

Psalm 67:1-7 "That your way be made known upon the earth, your saving power among all nations."

Revelation 21:10-14,22-23 "In the Spirit, the angel showed me the holy city, Jerusalem."

John 14:23-29 "The Advocate, the Holy Spirit, will teach you everything and remind you of all I have said to you."

Behold, He Makes All Things New

Introduction

There is an idea among some Christians called 'the rapture' when, at some point in time, those who have accepted Jesus Christ will be taken up into heaven, and those who have not will be left to suffer tribulation on the earth. Apparently, there are companies who operate on the basis of how they will continue if they suddenly lose some of their employees. For example, if a plane has two pilots, at least one of them would have to be a non Christian so that he or she would still be left to fly the plane if the Christian was suddenly gone from the cockpit. This is decidedly NOT a Catholic teaching and it is not a biblical teaching. However, people are always trying to understand how things will go if the end of time does come.

Today, we get some real insights into how God's great plan of salvation will be worked out in the end, and how it should operate in the world until that time.

Revelation

When the book of Revelation was written, Jerusalem was in ruins, the temple destroyed, and the people discouraged. John himself saw the church at Ephesus destroyed, the priests killed in front of him and all the Christians under the threat of losing everything. But John gets a vision of a new Jerusalem, which is built from the twelve tribes of Israel AND the twelve apostles. God will dwell in and among his people, all of them.

This city does not need a temple, where God lives, because the Lord God almighty and the Lamb of God ARE the temple. The people living in this temple don't need sun or moon to shine on them, for the Lamb, the risen Lord Jesus, is the lamp that reveals that light. To live in the new Jerusalem we too need to let God become our light.

Cities are places of conflict. They are Satan's to offer to Jesus in the desert. The new heavenly Jerusalem has become the place of worship of the true God.

Acts

Until that time, the world often operates on the basis of who is being included and who is being excluded? Who's in and who's out? In the world, that's always question. Are you a liberal or a conservative? Are you a Flames fan or an Oilers fan? Are you vaccinated or not? A lot of bullying and hostility takes place over those questions. That's what happens in the world. In God's plan, all are included, but there are some standards. There are some rules and there are some obligations. It's not people who are excluded. It's hatred and jealousy and all evil intent that do not belong in the kingdom of heaven.

Some were saying that the Gentiles could not be members of the Church, but only those who were part of the original covenant with God's chosen people. But, if they **were** to be allowed, would they have to observe the religious practices that had always been required. When St. Luke says there was no small dissension he means that there was in fact a great uproar and division.

The way the decision was reached is just as important as the decision itself. The believers addressed their differing practices beginning with bringing the representatives together, investigating and discussing, relating their experiences. In the end, it was the decision of the Holy Spirit and the whole Church. James, the leader of the Jerusalem Church considered all these things, made a judgment, then announced it in a letter. The letter was then taken by trusted personal representatives, Paul and Barnabas, to the Gentile Christians. They were trusted because they had suffered for the faith.

Two years ago, the bishops of Alberta, guided by the information they had and by the Holy Spirit, made the decision that baptized Catholics were not obligated to attend Sunday mass. This week, they made the decision to return to the requirement of Sunday mass attendance starting on Pentecost, two weeks from now.

The bishops point out that, in today's world, the word "obligation" may be taken negatively even when our sacred duty to worship God is one of our greatest privileges in choosing freely to respond to his initiative to reach out to us and shower us with His great love. Worship is our free response!

For God, who made us to receive the blessings he showers down on us, an obligation is not an empty ritual. It's not a meaningless gesture. Think about it like this. We are obligated to participate in our own happiness, because God has made us for joy, not to make ourselves sick with worry.

We are obligated to give praise and thanks to the great and glorious God, not to become slaves of the things to which we tend to become addicted. The psalmist says: Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. We are obligated by love to desire only good for ourselves and others, rather than to tear down others by harsh words and uncaring actions. This is what it means to be obligated.

John

Of course, how we behave in the Church is established by our saviour. One quarter of John's gospel is devoted to what Jesus said and did at the Last Supper. John begins his gospel with an echo of Genesis. The Word was with God and was God and (literally) became flesh i.e. pitched his tent among us. He becomes one with us in our tent like human experience.

When Jesus refers to 'keeping my word', he is actually referring to himself. We encounter the eternal Word of God in the person of Jesus. During his lifetime, Jesus was the one who stood alongside them as their guide, counsellor, and comforter. Jesus gives them the sad news that he will soon be leaving them. But

he also gives the assurance that he will still remain with them, a paradox they could yet understand. After the resurrection, Jesus would send them the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to remain with them always, reminding them of a deeper understanding of what Jesus taught them throughout his ministry. We continue to trust the Paraclete to preserve Christians from error and keep them ever close to the mind of Jesus.

A second gift that Jesus bestows is peace, shalom, which is complete harmony, even in the face of intense conflict, persecution, rejection and death. With this final assurance, Jesus granted his disciples his peace. It is not the peace of the world. It is the peace of being freed from sin and united to God, the only complete fulfillment of all our wants.

Call To Action

Today, we can thank God for the gift of himself. We know that we bring our gifts to him, which he does not need, and he changes those little gifts into the huge gift of his very own life, which he gives to us at communion.

We are not Christians because we are better than other people. We are Christians because of our desire to be close to the one who is all goodness. We are also not Christians because we know more than others but because we walk in the way of the one who is truth itself.

We are not Christians because we are better looking or better singers or more beautiful in some way. We are Christians because we recognize in our saviour the one who manifests perfect beauty, perfect harmony, perfect order, and we are drawn to him and to the kingdom he proclaims in himself.

Our faith does not place us above others. It places us in the presence of the one from whom all authority and honour and splendour and beauty and truth come forth. This closeness to the perfection of all things is so that we will be drawn into the beauty and goodness and truth of God and, in humility, to allow him to be manifested in us.

Our secularized society demands from us that the Church make certain changes, so we look more like the rest of society. In the process, we are being asked to move away from God. The poem Invictus is the theme for this way of being: I am the captain of my fate and the master of my soul.

With this perspective, Christianity becomes only a competing self help philosophy, where we pull ourselves up by the bootstraps and make something of ourselves in the world. In that model, we become just an ordinary success story, instead of a reflected image of the Father, in the Son, by the Holy Spirit.

However, we Christians should be faithful to Christ and to his message. Jesus "is the same yesterday, today and forever."

Key Verses Today

Entrance Antiphon: *Proclaim a joyful sound and let it be heard. Proclaim to the ends of the earth.*

Collect: *Grant, almighty God, that we may celebrate these days of joy, which we keep in honour of the risen Lord.*

Acts: *Certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." Paul and Barnabas were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the Apostles and the elders. Then the Apostles and elders sent leaders among the brothers with the following letter: To the believers of Gentile origin. We have heard that certain persons have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, and have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds. We have (also) sent Judas and Silas, who will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood and from what is strangled, and from fornication.*

Psalm: *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God. Let all the peoples praise you. Let all the ends of the earth revere him.*

Revelation: *In the Spirit, the angel showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It has the glory of God and a radiance like a very rare jewel. It has twelve gates inscribed (with) the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel. The wall of the city has twelve foundations, and on them are the twelve names of the Apostles of the Lamb.*

John: *Jesus said to his disciples: Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. I have said these things to you while I am still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and remind you of all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid.*